



Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department Secretary and the State Forester Announce Fire Restrictions for 21 NM Counties

Santa Fe – Due to high fire danger across parts of the state, New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Secretary John Bemis and State Forester Tony Delfin today announced restrictions on fireworks, smoking, campfire and open-fires for all or portions of 21 counties. The restrictions will go into effect at **8:00 a.m. on Friday, June 8, 2012.**

"Very high fire danger exists across much of western and parts of central New Mexico," said Delfin. "I'm urging all residents in the areas affected to follow the restriction guidelines to protect lives and property in their communities."

The restrictions will be imposed on all non-municipal, non-federal and non-tribal lands in Bernalillo, Catron, Cibola, Dona Ana, Grant, Hidalgo, Los Alamos, Luna, McKinley, Rio Arriba, Sandoval, Santa Fe, San Juan, Sierra, Socorro, Taos, Torrance, and Valencia counties. They also cover the portions of Colfax and Mora Counties west of Interstate 25 and only the portions of San Miguel County west of Interstate 25 and west of US Highway 84. The restrictions in all counties listed will remain in effect until rescinded. State Forestry will continue to coordinate with other jurisdictions including federal, counties and municipalities to insure that appropriate protections are in place to protect New Mexico as fire danger and wildfires increase. Further restrictions may be put in place should fire danger levels rise in counties not currently covered.

SMOKING, FIREWORKS, CAMPFIRE, OPEN BURNING, AND OPEN FIRES ARE PROHIBITED UNLESS THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS ARE MET:

Smoking is prohibited except in enclosed buildings, within vehicles equipped with ashtrays, and on paved or surfaced roads, developed recreation sites, or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable material.

Fireworks are prohibited in wildland areas. Wildland areas include lands covered wholly or in part in timber, brush, grass, grain, or other flammable vegetation. The State Forester is allowing exceptions to the ban on fireworks where they are a part of a public exhibit approved by the local fire department.

Campfires are prohibited unless the following exceptions are met. An exception is granted where cooking or heating devices use kerosene, white gas, or propane as a fuel in an improved camping area that is cleared of flammable vegetation for at least 30 feet or has a water source. New Mexico State Parks are included in this prohibition. For information on this contact the local State Park Manager or visit the website at www.nmparks.com.

The State Forester is also allowing exceptions for charcoal grills and wood and coal stoves within yards associated with a residence or on the premises of a business.

Open burning, i.e., burning of cropland, fields, rangeland, debris burning, slash piles, prescribed burning, or weed burning, is prohibited. The State Forester grants an exception to open burning when all of the following conditions are met:

1. the cropland is irrigated (This exception does not apply to non-irrigated croplands, fields, or rangelands.);
2. burning is done with adequate planning;
3. adequate personnel are present to monitor and control the burn to assure that it will not become an uncontrolled fire;

4. the burn area is secured from becoming uncontrolled at the end of daily operations; and
5. at the beginning of each day, before ignition, the person responsible for the burn notifies the local fire department responsible for fire protection and follows all local burning guidelines and 20.2.60.111 NMAC, Open Burning of Vegetative Material, related to state air quality.

Flaring of gas is prohibited. The State Forester grants an exception to the prohibition on open fires for the flaring of natural gas when the following conditions are met. Unless flaring is needed for safety purposes, flaring pursuant to this exception shall not be done on days that are "red flag days" as determined by the National Weather Service or on days when the sustained wind is in excess of 25 miles per hour in the area.

1. The day is not a "red flag day" as determined by the National Weather Service and the sustained wind is not in excess of 25 miles per hour in the area.
2. The local fire department and county dispatch are notified at least 24 hours in advance of anticipated releases that will result in flaring. If flaring is done by an automated system then the schedule of flaring shall be provided to the local fire department and county dispatch. The area is mowed and maintained at a length not to exceed 4 inches and all other flammable products or debris shall be cleared in the area for a distance of one and one half times the height of the stack.
3. At least one adult is on site with communications equipment adequate to reach county dispatch and the local fire department in the event of a fire. The individual should also be equipped with a shovel and a water backpack pump or other equipment to deliver water to suppress a fire.
4. If flaring is to take place at an unmanned facility, then the area around the flare stack is mowed and maintained at a length not to exceed 4 inches and all other flammable products or debris shall be cleared in the area for a distance of three times the height of the stack.

OTHER EXCEPTIONS MAY BE REQUESTED:

The State Forester may allow additional exemptions upon receiving a written request and granting subsequent approval in writing. You may apply for exemptions other than those listed above for flaring or agricultural burning on the Forestry Division website at www.nmforestry.com. The exemptions provided above for flaring and agricultural burning do not require a request or written approval so long as the conditions listed are met.

The State Forester may allow exemptions from the above upon receiving a written request and granting subsequent approval in writing. You may apply for an exemption on the Forestry Division website at www.nmforestry.com.

An exemption does not relieve a person from any civil or criminal liability associated with an uncontrolled fire, including costs associated with wildland fire suppression.

For details and the legal restriction notification, log onto www.nmforestry.com or call (505) 476-3325.